The Status of Women in Islam

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Publisher's Note

As regards the rights and status of women in society, the question arises as to whether the natural rights and status of men and women are identical or not; whether nature has gifted these rights bisexually or unisexually.

What is now before the respected reader is a series of three articles which, based on Quranic statements, claim that the question of the system of rights for women in the home as well as in society should once again be assessed.

International Relations Department

Islamic Propagation Organization

Women or Half of the Body of Society

point

by Ayatullah Mohammed Taqi Misbah al-Yazdi

The Solution to Social Problems

The greatest difficulty that one encounters while solving social problems is that one is bound to be influenced by factors like local customs, traditions, habits, emotions, blind imitation and so on. Subsequently, one is very likely to deviate from the path of truth, .and fail to distinguish between right and wrong

In problems pertaining to logic and science however, this difficulty

does not arise. In science, one first gathers primary premises and through logical inferences, one can arrive at a correct conclusion. In other words, in case differences or misunderstandings do crop up in scientific or philosophical issues, these can be usually attributed to a lack of adequate means and equipment or an absence of .logical inferences

Social problems, on the other hand, concern the benefits and losses, ideals and desires of the various classes in society, and here, most differences and disputes emerge as a result of rights and duties coming very often into conflict, and the reason why some individuals adhere to certain theories, opposing the views of others is because they do not base their motives which are other than truth seeking, social .justice and assuring an orderly functioning of society, on reason

It is here that often oratory, poetry, and misleading propaganda replace rational thinking. The result is that instead of seeking the help of experts, impartial scientists and scholars and initiating conferences to be attended by leading scholars, unbiased discussions and investigations, resort is often made to hooting, brawls and rows and .efforts are directed at misleading and inciting the fickle-minded

Following this, things are likely to get worse. The enlightened, the genii and pride of humanity, may be forbidden from guiding the people and freedom of expression and of the pen may severely be repressed. The lewd tongues and hireling poisonous pens would not only come to dominate, but would be further encouraged in their selfish endeavours. With

such a corrupt order prevailing, one can easily imagine what society's destiny would .be

Thus, one basic condition for making well-grounded judgements in such issues, will be to analyze them from an objective angle which seeks only the truths devoid of all emotions, the thick veils of passion or all influence that habits or customs may .exercise. In this way only, can one arrive at truth and proper judgements be made

Moreover, while objectively investigating such issues and for an under standing true to the facts, one must bear in mind the various dimensions which govern mans' life, his social interactions and the law of causality. So, before a categorical conclusion, the weak and strong points of the material, spiritual, individual and social aspects must be weighed carefully. So also, on finding that some factors contravene others, the more .important ones should be given priority

Unfortunately, in the analysis of these issues, there usually is a strong subjective inclination. Consequently, rational and peaceful ways give place to colonialistic and .violent ones

Blind imitation is one factor which has exerted a negative influence upon the solving of social problems. Indeed, too many rights are being trampled and a high degree of deviation can be witnessed as a result of blind, ignorant imitation of the ancestors and aliens' cultures, crippling many societies which come to find themselves in a sad state .of helpless strangulation

So, as said before, for a rational, logical study of these issues and opinions true to scale, one must beware the negative

influence that such factors may exercise. One should further have an objective mind, free from all subjection, whether by westerners or easterners, and a pure insight free from all passion or selfish motive

The Logic of Human Nature

The woman's rights issue, lately, has come to shed a lot of ink in our country. This was followed by events of which all of us are more or less aware. However, here is not the place to discuss them. For a well-founded study of the woman's rights, (note that she forms half of the world's population), we should consider her position in nature and society and find out what are he privileges and values granted her in nature or in religious terms, by Divine Power and Wisdom.

The Holy Quran-the last, perfect Divine Book and man's eternal guide, leading him towards prosperity and salvation both in this world and the hereafter, tells us that social laws must be framed in accordance with human nature:

... فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِی فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَیْهَا ۚ لَا تَبْدِیلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ۚ ذَٰلِکَ الدِّینُ الْقَیِّمُ وَلَٰکِنَّ أَکْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا یَعْلَمُونَ

..۱۵ The nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no altering of Allah creation, that is the right religion, but most people do not know. (۳۰:۳۰)

The logic of the Quran is unique and no scholar or scientist till now has been capable of such logic, no matter how much we study them. We challenge all those claiming to have found a better logic, to prove the contrary. Indeed, is

there any logic as good and decisive? This question will be clearly answered once it is .explained why human nature should be the basis of all laws and regulations

It is a commonly accepted fact, both by past and present philosophers, that every living being is endowed with a mechanism through which its survival becomes possible. Experimentation and the subsequent results have proved this beyond all doubt. Obviously there is little need for proofs or advanced technical reasoning and a .brief study of the life of living beings, plants or animals will easily point to this fact

For instance, it is common knowledge that a living being needs food for its survival. However, every living being or species needs different kinds of food according to its bodily needs. Moreover, nature has equipped each living being with a certain digestive mechanism which speaks for itself, for the purpose it has been created and the food .that suits it

A study of the digestive system of the herbivorous and carnivorous animals and the existing differences between their teeth, stomachs, bowels and so on, can be a true testimony and a decisive evidence to prove our point. Hence, a scientist, instructing how animals should be fed, must take into account the difference in the digestive mechanism of these animals and upon which, he should subsequently base his .instructions

Of course, since animals act through instinct, and not reason, they do not need to be instructed as far as their nourishment goes, though animal husbandmen may need

.instruction in feeding and breeding the animals

Again, so as to obtain an optimum use from a living being's potentials, one should study its natural mechanism to better understand its potentials, its strength, its limitations and the way it functions. So, the best way to determine the duties or rights of a human being will be to study its natural potentials and qualities. No measure is in .fact better than human nature

Woman's Natural Constitution

Man, being a spiritual, materialistic and intellectual animal, in addition to his individual characteristics, his social relations must also be considered. Therefore, a comprehensive disct\ssion on the rights of the woman should include studies in .physiology, psychology, sociology and other related sciences

An attempt to explain the basics of each of these may prove too much time, consuming. But for a proper under standing of our discussion, a brief explanation of .these disciplines is deemed necessary

That both man and woman are human beings is indisputable. Likewise, they both possess common human characteristics and values. But these cannot be taken as yardsticks in measuring the differences which exist between their rights and duties. Such differences do exist because of their peculiar characteristics on the basis of which they can be distinguished. To begin with, we must consider those differences present in the physical constitution of both the man and the woman. In other words, .we must find out what does the concept of womanhood mean and what is its basis

.The most pointing difference between a man and a woman is their sex

They do differ of course in their nervous systems as well as their other systems, but a .study of such differences lies within the confine of physiology

Man differs from the woman to a large extent from a psychological viewpoint. Women are normally more emotional, while in man, the intellect dominates over the emotions. This difference is directly related to their nervous systems and a critical psychological and physiological examination can prove very fruitful here. From a sociological viewpoint, studies in the emergence of the family unit as a strong factor and the role it .plays in uniting the married couple must be undertaken

Though the difference in sex of both the male and the female may seem normal and be regarded as a weak factor in determining their rights and duties, careful examination will prove that this very difference may determine to a high degree, their social status, material rights and duties. To even claim that other differences in their nervous systems, in their psychological set-up and so on are basically rooted in this .basic difference will not be an exaggeration

Between the woman and the man, there exists a reciprocal love and affection. A strong mutual sexual attraction and the pleasures that come with it help to lay the foundation of their union, enabling nature in this way to arrive at its goal, which is man's survival. Yet the man and the woman do not play an equal role in realizing this .goal

For instance, if man has to some extent, a

certain degree of freedom in sexual activities, (like he cannot be forced into sexual intercourse), with the woman, the opposite holds true. Again, man's reproductive role is instantaneous, while the woman has to bear the burden of pregnancy for several months. If we add to it the time she must spend on suckling, nurture, cherishing and .bringing up her child, then we see that her role is much longer than the man's

Oddly enough, a certain woman representative in the ex-regime's Senate had stated: "Childbirth is the simplest of things coming naturally to women, the same way as man would make a simple move to meet his needs." But as we all know, pregnancy and childbirth are sacred duties which are arduous, time consuming and momentous, and should not be compared in any way to ordinary daily activities or discussed so crudely .as done by this woman senator

A pregnant woman has to bear the indispositions and cravings that come with pregnancy and needs rest and medical treatment like does a sick person. As the doctors say, the pregnancy period resembles an illness. All through that period, the woman must see to it that she remains in good physical and mental shape, while at the same time, and avoid getting nervous, excited or exhausted. A neglect of these .might prove detrimental to both the mother and the foetus

Childbirth must also by no means be regarded as something instantaneous. Rather, it is preceded, accompanied and followed by pains, indispositions and possible side-effects. It

is further known that after delivery, the woman needs rest for the first few weeks, so .as to regain her normal disposition

Now, it is fitting to note that the reason as to why the Quran has restricted the woman's role in social affairs is not because it looks upon her as a means to procreating more people. Neither do we intend to argue to the contrary. We rather want to stress the more important reproductive role of the woman. We mean that man's role in the reproduction process cannot be compared to that of the woman, which entails a long period of pregnancy, pains of delivery and the sufferings that .follow it

Thus, we should recognize the woman's natural and innate role and duty in society and consider why has she been endowed with such natural characteristics and what .are her natural demands and capabilities

Since the burden of reproduction is the woman's only, Almighty God has bestowed on her such a power as to enable her to perform this important natural task, while at the same time to derive pleasure in the performance of it. This divine gift is the spiritual .force of motherly affection

No doubt, man would have found it unbearable had he been the one to bear the burden of motherhood. But this is the greatest ambition of a woman possessing a sound morale and a healthy temperament. In fact, there are many barren women who are ready to spend a fat sum so that they can be impregnated

.through medical treatment

Usually, man does find it a pleasurable experience to have children, but is he ready to bear the same troubles as does the woman for her child's sake? Is he ready to wash his young child as affectionately as would do a mother? Will he sacrifice his rest, comfort and leisures for the child or more important still, does he derive satisfaction in ?such arduous, exhausting tasks

If you do come across such a man, then rest assured that he is an exception to the rule. And as we know, while framing social regulations, such exceptions cannot be considered. Furthermore, the mentalities of the man and the woman about concepts .like child bearing differ basically

Can we rightly claim that both sexes manifest an equal, natural inclination towards the duty of child rearing and it’s like? Here we can say that the difference between the .man and the woman in their psychological and physical make-up is very well-defined

Man is usually more aggressive and quarrelsome, which qualities do not accord with motherly sentiments and care. On the contrary, woman is more convivial and peaceable in her feelings, in particular, motherly affection which can be regarded as the main source of her other emotions, the driving force behind her most willing .acceptance of these heavy duties, of which she makes ideals in life

Here, it must be pointed out that to argue (taking into consideration man's physical and psychological make-up) that man should shoulder equally the duties of motherhood with the woman

which duty is considered a most sacred one for the woman and a determining factor) .in maintaining the existence of man), would be wrong

Likewise, one cannot argue that the woman should engage in certain tasks which have been designed especially for man by creation and act shoulder to shoulder in cooperation with him. This reality becomes more pointing after a study of man's anatomy, which study would show how the apparatus of creation has constituted and built man so that he can naturally perform certain tasks, which fact will be discussed .in the pages to come

Physiologists and anatomists have also pointed to the difference which exists between the autonomic nervous system of the male and that of the female. For example, man's brain has been found to be anatomically larger than the woman's and is, .on the average, one-hundred grams lighter than a man's. So also, the front half of the woman's brain is more than fifty cubic millimeters smaller than the man's. In addition, as far as the brain structural components of both sexes go, physiologists have proved that the male's brain is anatomically distinguished from the female's, .showing signs of superior intelligence and mental growth

These were some of the most remarkable differences between a normal man and a normal woman. There might be exceptions, like in cases where a woman's brain proves to be larger than a man's. But as already mentioned, such exceptional cases .cannot be taken into account while framing regulations and rules for society

The Root of the Family Unit

So

far, in as much as the scope of this discourse has permitted, we have pinpointed the most striking structural differences between both sexes, whether physical or .psychological, the former having a direct relation to the latter

Now we come to a third point, namely the natural attraction of both sexes and the formation of the family. It is an indisputable fact that man, in the course of his life, finds himself in perpetual need of cooperation and assistance from his fellow-creatures, so much so, that he is regarded to be by nature, a social animal. This characteristic has indeed been decisive in the establishment of human societies which .have existed since ages

But can one consider this need for cooperation and assistance for survival, for defense against the enemy and for keeping the economy going, as the fundamental factor behind the creation of the family unity? Or should this assertion be rejected? Is it the same factor which brings man to cooperate with his fellow-creature that leads ?both sexes to a union to form a family

In other words, is the most genuine and natural human union, the result of man's pecuniary needs, his need to defend himself and so forth, or is it above all, the result of the mutual sexual attraction that naturally manifests itself in both sexes and the ?love for children that are the actual factors behind the establishment of the family

Has not the same Creator Who has created both the male and the female as to

be mutually attracted to each other (a feeling exerting a tremendous influence in the course of our life, dominating all other feelings and one of the most powerful forces in nature) meant this attraction to be the motive force behind the establishment of the ?social unit called the family

As mentioned earlier, a similarity characterizing two creatures cannot be taken as the cause behind the occurrence of a phenomenon peculiar to one of them. Further, if cooperation between two persons were to lead to the formation of the family unit, then two persons of the same sex could establish a family considering the principle of .similarity and group-cooperation

The necessity would not arise for the union of two members of the opposite sex whereas the foundation of a family unit invariably necessitates such a union, where .exists a perpetual appeal between each other

Therefore, a study of the natural being of the human male and the female, taking into account the sexual instinct, the natural, spiritual peace, tranquility and pleasures govern ing family life, and the unique marital relation, there will remain no doubt if any, that the family is basically founded on that very natural, mutual attraction .between them

Nature's Guidance in Determining the Woman's Role

Humanity and the characteristics in common to both sexes would be meaningless if any human being(١) is denied certain fundamental rights; rights which are natural, genuine and innate. Some of these rights are the right to be· independent, the right to think and act freely, the right to property, the right to equal

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The expression "any human being" is here meant to include every mature and - ١ intelligent person who is rated as a perfect member of society by religion and the .intellect. Children and those insane are excluded

.justice, the right to defense of one's legitimate rights and so on

No person can be deprived of these rights on the basis of his colour, sex, status, nationality or academic level. One and all should enjoy the e rights equally regardless of their being white or black, male or female, ruler or subject, Eastern or Western, .city-dweller or villager, educated or uneducated

Thus, the rules governing ancient civilizations, encouraging social privileges, bestowing the right to owner ship, freedom, education and other material and spiritual rights upon an exclusive class, or those civilizations where the woman was considered a merchandise and salvation, a prerogative belonging only to the male .sex, both in this world and the hereafter, went against human nature

Unfortunately, even at present, in some western nations, which are regarded by many as the pioneers of the so-called "caravan of civilization", one can still witness vestiges of these anti-human rules. One obvious example is the current discrimination .against the black man on the basis of his colour

However, there are those who by birth, possess superior qualities and peculiar aptitudes and when we come across them, we should not ignore them. The same thing applies to the difference that exists in the biological and physical constitution of the man and the woman. In fact in the legislation of the social rules, this factor should .be seriously considered

For instance, after conception, the woman, as per her physical build-up, becomes ready for suckling. Thus the right to suckle the baby becomes an innate right

of hers. No law can deny her this right. If a particular law stated that a father had full authority to give his child to anyone he. pleased for suckling, then this law would .definitely be against human nature

Likewise, if a law stated that the woman should go on the battle-fields to fight and defend the country against the enemy, this law would be in contravention with human nature, because man, by birth, is endowed with a stronger physique, is mentally more .strong and therefore, naturally more fit to fight than the woman

Of course, if it happens that there is not enough men to fight, then the right of defense which belongs to both sexes exacts that the woman too should come forward to fight; but when the number of men suffices for defense, and there is no need for women, it would not be right to ask the latter to fight on the ground that she .also has an equal claim to the right of defense

In such a case, it would be wrong to place the heavy and arduous burden of war and fighting upon the woman's shoulders, because the laws and regulations based on the common human characteristics can be applied only in cases pertaining to those very basic and common human rights and not in cases where the human characteristics differ. This is so because individual characteristics call for particular regulations as per .the individual nature

Therefore, regarding the woman, it is necessary to consider the

demands of her natural constitution in connection with social regulations. Nature has gifted her with the unique emotion of motherly affection, which certainly is one of her .inborn qualities

The momentous role that such emotions play in human society and their considerable influence upon the child's upbringing and the human emotions that they encourage in the young child is meat for discussion. Unfortunately, the limited scope of this discourse does not permit us to do so. We content ourselves with just mentioning that many proponents of free sex are now giving up this crazy, corrupt philosophy on realizing that it results in illegitimate offspring who are denied motherly affection .during their growth and the supreme human emotions that it entails

So, while formulating rules and regulations pertaining to the female sex, one should invariably keep in mind that these should in no way contradict the sacred duty of motherhood or be incompatible with the innate, divinely gifted emotions of the .female

Moreover, researchers have proved beyond all doubt, that a society based on the family system is the most natural and genuine of societies. Such a society is the outcome of the natural urge that both sexes feel towards each other. Any law contravening this natural order will therefore be inhuman, detrimental to society and .repressive to the woman and the whole of mankind

Another noteworthy point is that, the same as the woman(۱) by birth is more emotional than the man, the latter is physically and mentally stronger. It is this very difference

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۱- Of course, the woman is superior to the man in certain qualities, one of which is her .power of resistance against certain diseases and ailments

between them that makes the evolution of human society and man possible. The wide research of physiologists and psychologists tells us that this superiority is an .indisputable reality. History also, all through, has pointed to this truth

So, certain tasks which accord with man's physiological and mental structures, tasks like fighting which demands a lot of courage, should be reserved for him, whether they bring pleasure or pain. Indeed, this shall benefit mankind as a whole and be in .accordance with the natural order

The Woman in Islam

:Before plunging into this discussion, we must mention a few points

For a realistic understanding of the fund aments of Islam, a primary careful - ۱ examination of the Quranic verses, the undistorted narrations of the Holy Prophet of .Islam (S.A.W.) and the impeccable Imams (A.S.) and their life becomes imperative

One must not analyse the dictates of Islam on the basis of the action of some Muslims at a certain time or place. For instance, if some Muslims abuse the woman's rights, .this injustice should not be attributed to Islam

Likewise, it would be wrong to affirm that Islam has ignored the legitimate rights of the woman on hearing or observing that somewhere or at a certain period, the Muslims have been denying the woman her legitimate rights. When one observes Islamic tenets being negated in some Muslim lands, which prefer rather to copy Western cultures, one should not conclude that the governing laws agree with Islam, .even if millions of Muslims do follow these Westernized ways

Again, the distortions, carried

so often to extremes and the wrong conceptions of the Westerners cannot be attributed to the religion of Jesus Christ (A.S.). We know that some Christian sects hold that the woman is not a full human being and that she is a link between animals and mankind or that her soul (excepting that of Virgin Mary) is not eternal, eternal salvation being the prerogative of man alone. These far-fetched conceptions cannot be attributed to Christ's teachings. So also, it would be totally wrong to associate the reigning corruption and prostitution in the Western world with Christianity.

۲- Civil and Penal Laws are framed while considering the average normal citizen of a society and exceptions have no room here. There are in fact very few constitutional articles which are based on exceptions. Thus, if there are exceptional cases which contravene existing laws, these laws cannot be called invalid. One cannot blame the legislator when such cases do crop up.

۳- The religious laws and precepts, do not only preserve the order of society and safeguard its material interests, but also take stock of the spiritual and intellectual aspects. It would be wrong to imagine that Islamic injunctions bother themselves only with worldly interests.

In fact, how can one suppose that the Exalted Legislator-Almighty God, Who has given utmost importance to man's eternal salvation and Who has, so splendidly exhibited the spirit of Tawhid (Divine Unity) and Divine worship in all the manifestations of life, has neglected the spiritual aspect, giving sole importance to what

?is material

This however does not imply that in the sacred teachings and precepts of this perfect Divine religion, the material is totally absent. Indeed, how can one believe that God- the Almighty Legislator, Who has established such a perfect balance between body and soul to fulfil the goal of creation and has made of this world a farm where man sows the seeds of his eternal life and reaps the fruits in the here after according to his deeds and beliefs in this world, could have neglected the material aspects in the .religious teachings of this sacred religion

We should be invariably mindful that God has created man in this earthly world so that he can attain perfection for which he has been ordained in the evolutionary course of his life. His earthly life is the foundation for his eternal life. His beliefs, ways and deeds in this world will directly determine his eternal life, a life of salvation or chastisement .as the case may be

Divine Legislation directs man, in the course of his life, to recognize the straight path in the light of Divine Guidance and instructions so that journeying on that divinely illuminated path he can reach the ideal destination. Man by instinct, like the animal fails to recognize and distinguish between good and evil. This explains his need for .Divine Legislation as a discussion on prophecy would reveal

Thus, man's instincts do not help him to differentiate between right and wrong in this earthly world, affecting life in both the

.worlds. His intellect also fails to satisfy this purpose of creation

The human brain, limited in its capacity, cannot fore see all things which bring salvation, in particular, salvation in the next world-eternal life. Having not yet entered the next world, the human intellect fails to perceive the means, conditions and causes which bring prosperity and salvation in that world, or the obstacles on the way to .eternal salvation

Due to this, man often fails to distinguish between good and evil in the course of his life, preventing him from directing his actions in the way of eternal salvation. That is why he becomes in need of Divine revelation by the One Who has command over all .lives, affairs and Who Knows the ins and outs of the apparatus of creation

So, both Divine Creation and Divine Legislation have one goal. Each complements the other. It is obvious! that the Creator of man Who places him on the Divine Path in nature through guidance and instructions about Divine Creation and Legislation so that he may attain the ideal, does so for man's progress and well-being. He is the One and Only, the All-Knowing and All-Seeing, whether it stands in relation to the material, .the spiritual or the world after

Is there anyone besides God, the One and Only, Who can be All-Knowing and All-Seeing and Who can frame regulations governing man's life in such a comprehensive ?way which covers all aspects, whether material or spiritual

Hence, we can state that Muhammad (S.A.W.), the Seal

of all Prophets, was sent Divine Revelation which he communicated to mankind so that the latter through Divine Guidance, can attain an ideal state of perfection and .well being in both worlds and that this Revelation does not err in the least

So, anyone who considers himself a Muslim and who believes Islamic injunctions to be defective and inadequate in meeting society's needs, or that they are relevant only at a certain time or place, is either definitely ignorant of the fundaments of Islam, or .lacks the intellect for its understanding

With the conflicting opinions and thoughts ever since the beginning of man's history -۴ and the continuous advance in some fields of knowledge, we know that the ideal, the highest stage of perfection has, till now, not yet been experienced by man. At no period of time, and in no places, has he been able to grasp all the mysteries and truths .of creation

At present, scientists are perplexed by many mysteries and realities of creation which they have not yet come to solve. And no one, in his right mind, can claim that man will not gain new fields of knowledge. Some have foolishly asserted that man of the atom age has solved all the mysteries of creation. Yet, it has been a long time since they .have realized how baseless their assertions have been

One cannot expect to understand all the puzzles of creation. The same as we do not understand the enigmatic being of a human, we certainly cannot

expect to understand the complex system of Divine Legislation in regard to the .material, the physical, intellectual and other worldly aspects

No doubt, new mysteries will become known to man of the future, the same way the unknown of the past few centuries have become the known to contemporary man. And still, there are mysteries yet to be discovered by man and there are others which .go beyond his understanding

The fact remains that the invaluable collection of Islamic teachings, comprising - ۵ beliefs, morals, and individual and social rules is an electuary healing the pains and ailments of society and ensuring salvation of man in this world and the hereafter. Yet it shouldn't be concluded· that Islamic injunctions and rules will all by themselves bring .the ideal result under any condition

And hence, statements like, "This rule of Islam is anachronistic to our contemporary society" must be avoided. The time factor must not be attributed to Islamic dictates .and these must not be thought defective

Careful examination will reveal that if an Islamic dictate seems apparently ineffective (if at all it is), this is due to a neglect of other Islamic dictates, inadequate religious education, moral and spiritual decadence in our present society and not because .Islamic laws are defective or are limited to a certain period of time or place

Concerning the woman's position in Islam, it is to be noted that Islam regards the woman as an independent, perfect member of society and places no difference between her and the man as

.far as human virtues go

Islam maintains that salvation will be attained only through piety, virtue, knowledge :and good deeds. As says the Holy Quran

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ..

Oh you men! surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you" tribes and families that you may know each other, surely the most honourable of you (with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty)..." (۴۹: ۱۳

:And

أَنِّی لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِنْكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ ۖ بَعْضُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْضٍ

I will not waste the work of a worker among you, whether male or female, the one of" (you being from the other."(۳:۱۹۵

Therefore, Islam does not differentiate between the virtuous, dutiful man and the woman possessing the same qualities. In Islamic society, the woman has the right to own and sell property, to inheritance, to seek knowledge and even to engage in legitimate trade. In Prophet Mohammad's (S.A.W.) time, there was a woman named Zeinab 'Aattaare who sold perfumes and had the Prophet as one of her clients. In Islam, the woman can also take pan in social activities in so far as her participation is :consistent with chastity and virtue

فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا فَعَلْنَ فِی أَنْفُسِهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ

(There is no blame on you for what they do for themselves in a lawful manner," (۲:۲۳۴"

In Early Islam, the women used to accompany the Muslim combatants (Mujahedeen) to the war

.fronts and helped in cooking and nursing the wounded and so forth

There however does exist a certain difference between the rights and duties of both sexes in Islam. For instance, only the men can engage in the administration of justice, in governing, and embarking on Jihad (excluding defense). Also, the woman's share in .inheritance is half against that of the man

The right to divorce and polygamy under certain conditions belong to man alone. The woman must obey her husband in the marital relations and that is why she should not leave her home without prior permission from him. The latter on his part, should support his wife and provide her with the necessities of life to the best of his financial capacity. In some cases even, Islam says that, if necessary, the husband must employ .a servant for his wife

In Islam, the duty of house-keeping like laundry, cooking, cleaning and even child-rearing does not necessarily belong to the woman and she can claim a salary from her .husband in return for such tasks

All these are considered legal in Islam. Again, when religious training and Islamic morality is encouraged, the family enjoys peace, pleasure, respect, mutual love, affection and sincerity. Obviously, in those families, educated and trained in .accordance with Islamic precepts and values, few cases of dispute are reported

Now, we should see whether Islam contradicts the natural order when it differentiates between the man and the woman as far as their rights go. As said before, a proper understanding

of this question would necessitate a careful examination of the demands of both sexes' innate dispositions in view of their rights and duties. The time factor however does not permit a detailed explanation of this. So we shall be content with giving only .a brief account, hoping that in future, an elaborate discussion can be presented

As common experiences have proved, man is physically and intellectually superior to the woman who herself is more emotional. Hence, jobs demanding more of intellect and where emotions are impediments should go to man as per the natural order. This must be so because it is the rulers and judges who must preserve the rights of all classes in society. If emotions are allowed to permeate government and judgement, .then the rights of many will be violated by the authorities in charge

So, government and legal judgement should lie where reason dominates over feelings. But one should not conclude that the mere fact of being a man is the sole criterion for governing and exercising judicial functions. Other conditions which have .been explained in Islam must also be satisfied

We rather mean that considering both sexes, man is naturally born for certain activities. Thus, when Islam makes such a distinction between them, it can in no way be said to be oppressive to the women or debasing to their values and dignity. The .same must be said when Islam calls the man to be the bread-earner, or the warrior

Man cannot take this to be derogatory to

his status and values. These Islamic dictates aim at ensuring cooperation and mutual assistance for society's order and interests, through a proper usage of the divinely .bestowed gifts to all human beings, no matter their sex

Since man is physically and mentally superior, he should indulge in social activities calling for these two qualities, while the woman, being more emotional, should undertake duties like house-keeping and child-rearing so that she can bring up pious .and dutiful children

As mentioned, the Omnipotent Creator, in view of the family being the core of society, has provided us with conditions which would establish its foundation. For instance, the natural sex magnetism, to unite into a lifelong companionship where peace and .happiness can be sought

The family also awakes that innate nature, namely the natural affection that any human being feels towards its offspring. The illuminating religion of Islam considers family life to be of great significance. In Islam, the woman brings mental peace and happiness and the mutual affection between the couples is in accordance with the .natural order

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً ..

And one of His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may" (find rest in them, and He put between you love and compassion..." (۳۰:۲۱

This verse makes clear the harmony that exists between Divine Legislation in the natural order of creation and human nature. Now we should see what laws and regulations should be framed in relation to the

.demands and requirements of the family institution

The vital significance of the family society can be understood through meditation on the Quranic verses, which significance has been testified and confirmed by .researchers and sociologists

The family comprising these two main elements, namely man and woman, calls for their mutual cooperation and provides for their needs. In reality, both of them together form one body, enabling the tree of humanity to grow and eventually bear fruit. So, it is through cooperation that the couple can nurture and educate the seed of .their fruits

No doubt, · man's natural role in the process of reproduction differs from that of the woman. His is instantaneous while hers is time-consuming and painful. A woman cherishes this fruit inside her body for several months, nurturing it with the juice of her life and after child-birth, she embraces it as she would her own life and soul, .suckles it and instinctively, sacrifices rest, comfort and peace for it

Really, would not we be oppressing the woman, if apart from the heavy duties that womanhood entails, we do impose the arduous, exhausting duties of the man upon her? Does the natural order call the woman to leave her child in nurseries and go struggling for a living? What will the woman do with her breasts full of milk? How should she tolerate being separated from her child since her motherly love and affection can bring insanity to her if such a painful separation does occur? Should not the man be the

one to financially support the family to compensate the woman for the heavy ordeal of pregnancy, child-birth, suckling, nurturing and the other duties that come with ?motherhood

Should the man think selfishly of satisfying his sexual desires and forget all about the woman's heavy burden and duties? Can it correctly be affirmed that the woman's sexual promiscuity thereby killing all her motherly feelings, benefit her since by so indulging, she frees herself from natural and innate bonds? Can it be claimed that when we deny the child motherly affection, a divinely bestowed gift, making of the family a cold and lifeless unit (as so often is the case with western countries, especially America), is a fundamental step towards reforming society and securing ?women's rights? Can such actions which go against the natural order benefit society

Answers to these questions can easily he found if one looks at the ever-increasing social miseries, sufferings and the mind-blowing statistics on suicide, murder, theft, and so on in the western world and at the pains of the apparently so-called civilized world as a result of its being deprived of the comfort, mental peace and happiness of .family life

As a famous orientalist says: "The pleasure that a Muslim derives from kissing his child is not imaginable to many westerners, because in the civilized world of today, few men are positive that their· children are really their own." He adds: "I do not think that the westerners can bear to see the easterners enjoying this privilege. Perhaps

".they will take it away from them soon

Those who are under the illusion of the industrialized world of the westerners, and allow themselves to be subject to their poisonous propaganda, still imagine the west to be like paradise, that anything western is worthy of commendation and imitation. These people, upon realizing their wrong conceptions, will regret painfully. But this painful realization, however, comes to them too late, i.e. when the person or the .family has already been ruined through continuous deviations

As a matter of fact, many western scientists and writers are beginning to realize the harm done by such misconceptions of life and values and are now directing efforts at solving this dilemma. Unfortunately, western societies, in corruption and immorality, .have already reached a state of no return

As states an· American writer: "To remove these problems, it is necessary to reform and strengthen the family life and once more, put into practice the useful principles and rules which once governed the happiness of the family members and nations and which have been lost now. Women should obey and respect their husbands while the ".latter should love their wives and observe their respective rights

An English woman writes: "I wish our country were like the Muslim countries, where an atmosphere of chastity and purity has embraced even the bondswomen. Really, why isn't such an atmosphere encouraged in our society where women, as per their nature, would engage in house-keeping, leaving outdoor jobs to men, whereby ?safeguarding their own honour

Here we recommend those

who upon witnessing the western cabarets and other centres of corruption, argue that scientists and inventors like Pasteur, Edison and Einstein are products of such centres of corruption to at least take a glance at the unprejudiced investigations and writings of some western researchers, scientists, writers and publications. By so doing, they might recognize the value of Islamic teachings and not give away the .divinely bestowed, invaluable gift that is Islam

Now, having shown that the social rules should be so formulated as to be in accordance with human nature, it· becomes clear that child-rearing and house-keeping are duties which should go to the woman. On the other hand, those duties which accord with man's natural constitution, such as the duty of supporting the family should be reserved to him. Thus, the family unit which guarantees the survival of the human race and nurtures competent, pious individuals will serve its purpose in .the best way

When we regard the duties of both sexes, we see that the greater share of man in property inheritance is quite just and moreover, in reality, the woman does share this property with him. In this connection, can it be said that Islam violates the woman's .rights? We leave it to the just to answer this question

We should further not neglect to mention that man has not been merely created for material and sexual pursuits. Rather, the sexual instinct is one among many endowed in human nature for the attainment of certain goals, though one should not

.neglect one's sexual instinct for satisfying other instincts by going to extremes

Nor is it proper to undermine all humane virtues and supreme goals of creation so as to satisfy the sexual instinct. Today, many are the sexual perverts, who in their vain attempt to satisfy their sadistic sexual desires, supposedly fight for the emancipation and freedom of the woman. Their only aim is to satisfy their sexual desires while watching the exposed bodies and painted faces of the women and indulge in .illegitimate, anti-human sexual relations with them

But Islam which looks at all matters from all possible angles and recognizes only the truth, distinguishing between good and evil, strictly prohibits unchastity and sexual exploitation of women, regarding this to be detrimental to humane virtues and the .family

Islam commands the woman to cover herself from head to toe once she leaves her house and outside the family environment (according to many Islamic jurisprudents, the covering of the face and hands up to the wrists is not necessary). This is so to prevent men other than her husband, or close relatives with whom marriage is prohibited, such as brothers, uncles and so on from seeing her physique. The woman outside the family environment must also not use make-up so as to attract the men :and engage in coquetry in any way. As says the Holy Quran

وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ...

And let them wear their head-coverings over their bosoms and not display their" (ornaments." (٢۴:٣١

فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِى فِى

قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ

(Then be not soft in (your) speech, lest be in whose heart is a disease yearn," (۳۳:۳۲"

Islam also regards the right to divorce as exclusive to man. To understand why that is :so, we must consider the following basic points

On one hand, the preservation of the family institution is of vital importance while on the other hand, there are factors which do cause disagreement and discord in the family, so that the couple finds life unbearable together. Here, it becomes important .for the marriage contract to be terminable

The woman, being by nature more emotional and quick to take offence, is likely to misuse the right of divorce had it rested with her. Being hurt for a trivial reason, out of .emotions, she can ruin the family by a misuse of this right

The rising rate of divorce in European and American societies are clear testimonies to this fact. As statistics reveal, a least one out of every five marriages in America, ends m divorce and eighty percent of the appeals for divorce come from women, on petty excuses. Therefore, man, a more rational and less emotional animal, has a right claim .to the right of divorce

Yet, in Islam, divorce is regarded as a bitter medicine which should not be applied except in extreme cases, with hard conditions and careful observance of the rights of both parties. In the Quranic verses pertaining to divorce, Allah e Compassionate strictly addresses men, giving them instructions, advices, admonitions and warning them not

:to misuse this right

وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ سَرِّحُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ ۚ وَلَا تُمْسِكُوهُنَّ ضِرَارًا لِتَعْتَدُوا ۚ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَٰلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ ۚ وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا آيَاتِ اللَّهِ هُزُوًا ۚ وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

And when you divorce women and they reach their prescribed time, then either" retain them in good fellowship or set them free with liberality, and do not retain them for injury, so that you exceed the limits, and whoever does this, he indeed is unjust to his own soul; and do not take Allah's communications for a mockery, and remember the favour of Allah upon you, and that which He has revealed to you of the Book and the Wisdom, admonishing you thereby, and be careful (of your duty to) Allah, and (know that Allah is the Knower of all things." (٢:٢٣١

Thus, if one observes an abuse of the right to divorce, one should understand that this is a result of deviation from the teachings of the Quran and not because the Islamic dictates are defective in any way. This deviation is effected by those who keep the people away from Islamic teachings and keep them busy with corruptive ...... entertainments like pornographic films, immoral publications

Another right given to man by Islam is the right to polygamy. Now let's see whether this is an extreme idea and against the natural order, or whether it benefits society and accords

:with nature. The following points will help in giving a better understanding

Man becomes potentially reproductive in early puberty and till late in his life, he is (۱ able to fulfil his own role in reproduction, while the woman usually becomes barren .after the age of fifty

Thus, a twenty-year-old male married to a fifteen-year old female will presumably be potentially reproductive for a thirty-five year period. After this period, the man will still be potentially reproductive until the age of ninety. However, the woman won't be so in the second phase of her marital life. There will thus be no ground for rearing the .seeds put in man's loins by nature

Man faces no natural obstacle, whether seasonal or non-seasonal in his (۲ reproductive functions. But the woman is subject to these natural obstacles which hinder her reproductive role even at a very early age, such as menstruation which occurs monthly and lasts for a few days and all through her menstruation, the woman .is not fit for sexual coitus

In addition, during pregnancy, when the womb is nurturing the foetus as well as a few weeks after conception, the woman's reproductive organs cannot rear new seeds .and that is so also in many cases during the suckling phase

It is harmful for a woman to have sexual intercourse at the time when her womb is (۳ not ready for impregnation. Hence, Islam has prohibited sexual intercourse during the menstruation and Lochia period. Obviously, if in such cases, men are not allowed to satisfy

their sexual urge in a legitimate way, they may seek illegitimate relations, in particular, those men living in tropical countries and those who are sexually hot-blooded.

4) Girls naturally become ready for marriage several years earlier than boys, and this difference is so pointing that while determining the legal age of marriage, this fact has to be taken into account.

Thus, even if we suppose that both sexes are equal in number (though the number of women mostly exceeds that of the men), still we have to admit that there will invariably be more females of marriageable age than males.

5) Since man is more likely to be exposed to dangers like war, mine accidents, explosions and the like, there are invariably many widowed women and many girls who are ready for marriage but remain unmarried. As in Germany and some other countries where, though many years have passed since the end of World War II, its effects are still being felt, explaining the reason for the high number of those who are in favour of polygamy in those regions.

The above facts and taking notice that the natural goal of the marriage institution is the survival of the human race and the magnification of the human generation, clearly show why Islam allows polygamy for men.

However, it should be noted that in Islam, the prescription for polygamy is subject to the perfect observance of justice among the wives. That is, Islam holds that a man is allowed to practice polygamy on condition that

he can treat all his wives on an equal basis. Moreover, Islam has also presented ways .which can enable the woman to restrict this right of man as well as his right to divorce

It is known by all that in countries where the law of polygamy is not officially recognized, actually men do not content themselves with one wife and indulge in illegitimate extra-marital promiscuous relations (single and double adultery), whether temporary or permanent. In a lecture given at a gathering of members from the churches of Germany, Isaac Teeler disclosed this fact. He said: "It is true that apparently the Christians do not marry more than one woman, but we know that how ".heinously they engage in illegitimate extra marital relations in secret

Moreover, in such Christian communities, homosexuality is shamefully so common, as in England where presumably this satanic act is considered somewhat more disgraceful than it is in other western countries. The 'Kenzy' and 'Lefindon' reports and others on this issue reveal how the so-called aristocrats indulge in this shameful .act which has so often ended in suicide and murder

It is indeed extremely surprising that in countries where "concubinage"- (practice of living as man and wife when not lawfully married) is not legally prohibited, abnormal sex is the rule. Again, more shocking still, is the fact that in spite of such rampant corruption and sexual deviations in these countries, they are still pessimistic about polygamy and temporary marriage-factors which aim at checking corruption and .adultery

Islam and Women's Rights

point

by Muhammad

Introduction

The story of woman's rights and her liberty is one of the live and attractive issues being discussed over the last few years in the Eastern circles. Islamic countries are also faced with this debate, and different societies have different views in this regard, .positive and/or negative

Occasionally the matter extends beyond the limits of a debate and quietly enters the field of action making some special appearances in the Islamic environment. This issue of freedom and equality of rights is occasionally extended to such lengths; rightly or wrongly, that it reaches sensational limits, sometimes to the extent of being .dangerous and repulsive

Naturally in these discussions or actions, the name of Islam is also dragged in and various interpretations of the Islamic viewpoint are made in this regard. Some say that Islam is totally opposed to any liberty or progress for women and declare that Islam regards woman as a lowly weakling totally captive in the hands of man, .deprived of all rights and social privileges

She, according to them, has no right to property or dignity, not even in the selection of her husband and determination of her own destiny. She is deprived of the blessing of letters and is required to stay, with her eyes and ears closed, in the corner of her house, detached from society, to obediently perform every whim of her husband. She is condemned to live the life of a miserable creature that has no wider role to play in the human society. The

life envisaged for her is the mean life of a helpless captive condemned to live and die without rights and without dignity. This is one type of thinking in regard to Islam's .view of women's rights

There is another group of extremists who feel that they can stretch Islamic laws in accordance with their whims and fancies and make the sacred laws of Islam march in step with their own imagination at all cost. They feel that Islam has granted all sorts of rights and freedom to woman so as to permit her to intervene in all social spheres .along with men, working shoulder to shoulder with him

At times she is pictured as being present on the battlefront and, sometimes, supposed to decorate the seat of a deputy or a minister. She may roll up her sleeves and work to .launch missiles, hold the command of an army or sign a treaty of peace

She is also, at times, required to dance in rhythm with men and twine her arms in the arms of any friend or stranger or appear in her bikini, bathing in public swimming pools or at the beaches. They are those who do not consider it wise, in view of social considerations, to formally negate the Islamic doctrines. They, therefore, try as far as .possible, to explain and interpret Islamic laws so as to meet their objectives

There is another group which, without the least reservation or hesitation, openly and clearly pursue their objectives. It is none of

their business that the country is an Islamic state or its people followers of the teachings of Islam. Irrespective of all this, they move ahead in the direction of their whims and fancies and senseless imitation of others.

As to the question how this debate started, what its origin is, here are the clues.

Change in Woman's Legal Position in Europe

A woman in the tribal and barbaric societies was considered a subhuman beast or a chattel used to fulfil sensual needs and required to perform menial and worthless jobs. She was a bonded labourer who lived only to be exploited by man in whatever manner he deemed fit. She did not live to enjoy life or exercise human rights and privileges.

Later, in semi…barbaric or half…civilized human societies, woman continued to be the subject of debate, and different opinions were expressed about her such as:

- Woman is the abominable creation of the devil;
- She does not have a human soul, hence no life in the Hereafter;
- Women's deeds are not acceptable to God;
- Being a means of satanic seduction, she should be physically tortured;
- Death, poison, fire and the serpent are lesser evils compared to her;
- Girls should be buried alive to wash away the scars of disgrace;
- Women are human beings, but were created to serve man.

These and other such views in regard to woman have been expressed by the ancient Romans, Arabs, Frenchmen and Athenians.

Europe's civilized societies recognize woman as a human being but deprive her of many a human right. They even did not consider her

to be a citizen of the state, nor granted her any personal rights. A girl was required to .accept anyone selected by her guardians as her husband

She was only the means of fulfilling the carnal desires of man and maintained for this purpose. She was used to work on farms and at home on the one hand, and, on the other, to satisfy man's sexual passions; beyond this she had no significant legal .protection

Before the advent of the Industrial Revolution, European families lived a simple and modest life; women helped in agriculture and household affairs. They occasionally .kept themselves busy with some small handicrafts within the household

However, the family and social life of a woman, along with her husband and children, was confined to the premises of her home, enriched by the environment of mutual love and affection. The Industrial Revolution brought into existence large industrial complexes and heavy industries. The need for large numbers of workers resulted in .the break-up of the family

Women and children had to leave the warm family atmosphere of their villages and were dragged into industrial cities and towns. Hard and tiring working conditions, break-up of families, unlawful mixing of women with men in the work premises, the pressure of sexual urges on both sides, the erosion of familial sentiments, the exploitation of unprotected and unsheltered women by the managers of industrial houses in order to satisfy their lusts, resulting in the spread of corruption, prepared .the ground for a revolution

The women felt

that the burden of life had fallen on their shoulders and they had been deprived of all sentiments and privileges of a pleasant family life. They had lost their husbands, their children, their honour, their chastity and everything else.

They realized that although the war had devoured millions of men and youth, and the factory owners were in urgent need of women to keep the wheels of industries moving, yet they never attached any value to them and continued to oppress them.

Moreover, they were not even paid proper wages. Discrimination between men and women continued. The women were dragged into all types of corruption and moral pollution. The unsheltered and unprotected women, crushed under the pressure of such a life, were compelled to surrender to this forced life of indignity and sub…human existence.

They felt that they had lost everything: they had to turn the wheel, to carry the burden and yet keep their mouths shut. They had to tolerate oppression yet abstain from protests under its crushing weight, Apparently, they were working shoulder to shoulder with men, but, in fact, they were no more than the oppressed beasts of burden fallen captive in the hands of a handful of profiteers. Every hour they had to surrender to all and sundry, suffering severe indignities for meagre wages.

The pressures caused by this atmosphere aroused their feelings and encouraged them to protest and strike resulting in their eventual arrests and killings.

Finally as a result of continued efforts, through speeches and writings, they

found their way to the centres of authority and penetrated into the legislative assemblies. Slowly and gradually, they not only achieved the goal of equal pay for equal work, but also achieved equal rights with men with the right to participate in all spheres of activity. The question is, how far has this freedom and equality of rights in all spheres been to the benefit of men and women or how far has it been harmful to them? This is the subject of another debate to be discussed some other time.

Woman's "Liberation" Comes to Eastern Countries

Europe with its industrial advancement achieved industrial hegemony over the world. This was followed with expanded activities in other fields as well. The European civilization with its big row and fanfare succeeded in snatching the leadership of the world and attracting the attention of the backward nations.

The nations of the East were so impressed by European developments that for them anything that the Europeans did was exemplary. Their food, their dress, their mode of thinking, their etiquette, their morals, laws, their system of public rights and everything else were regarded as flawless and to be diligently imitated. They felt that whatever the Europeans did and said must be accepted with folded hands and closed eyes.

They felt that they should lay down their determination, their individual respect, their moral and material wealth, their religion and national customs and traditions at the feet of these Europeans and in turn put the chains of slavery around their necks without any complaint.

Following this allurement

mixed with moral and spiritual weakness, these lovers of the West turned their eyes towards it anxiously waiting to welcome whatever came from Europe. The tumult of woman's liberation and its practical off…shoots found their way to the Islamic countries, where they received a warm welcome as souvenirs from the West, forgetting that it was a creation of special circumstances and developments in the West that demanded such an outcome; whereas those conditions did not prevail in .Islamic countries

Islam, for the last so many centuries, had granted a dignified personality to woman, bestowing all human rights and privileges upon her, including some special rights in particular spheres. It will be discussed in detail as to how Islam did provide a special privileged position to the female sex and favoured her with a sublime position in .accordance with her physical and spiritual structure

It may be pointed out that the explosive conditions of industrial development, resulting in the break-up of families, leading to the suffering and oppression of women, and calling for a revolution in Europe, did not exist in these countries. But it was only the urge for doing what others had done that obliged the people in Islamic .countries to follow suit

They thought that whatever came from Europe was a heavenly command to be followed. On the other hand, all this had a strong appeal based on sensual and carnal desires. All these factors put together brought a group into existence that started .struggling for the so…called women's liberation

.They gathered under this slogan and the result is what we see today

The Relationship between Woman's Natural Structure and Her Rights

Here, as we enter the main subject itself, we shall discuss the question of women's rights from the Islamic point of view, setting aside all fanaticism and keeping ourselves aloof from the pressures of the environment and the uproar of the supporters of `civilization'. Let us first of all briefly consider men and women from the point of view of physical structure, biological and psychological make...up and see whether or not these two creatures have any difference from these

points of view. If they have, do these differences demand that each of them should have a particular limitation or special rights? Also, whether or not these legal differences in such special circumstances are incompatible or inconsistent with the ?human personality and social status of either of them

The world is full of different objects and phenomena, each having its own peculiarities as different from the others. Each has its own limitations and special features that bring elegance and grace to them. There is variety amongst animals, the fauna and .flora, and similarly between individuals of the same species

Similarly, human beings are different and have particular characteristics. Whereas differences between species are deep, the differences amongst individuals are superficial. However two persons are not the same in all respects, so much so that even the fingerprints of two persons are sufficient to distinguish one from another, leave alone other aspects. One notices differences amongst people in their thoughts, ,capabilities, sentiments

mental and physical abilities, the intensity of instincts, outward appearance, height .and weight and other internal and external factors

The effect of these superficial differences is witnessed in the status and ranks these individuals obtain in society. Each according to his capabilities and circumstances shares the burden of the society: It is this variety that fulfils all the requirements of .the society and perpetuates the movement of life

In regard to men and women, there are some deeper observable differences that make the two sexes separate from each other and call for special duties and status for each of them. As far as the physiological structure is concerned, the male is on an average endowed with stronger nerves, physical structure, greater weight, height, '.and brain quantity. This by itself indicates that he is made for hard and difficult jobs

The part of the brain that is related to emotions is more in a female, whereas the portion of the brain dealing with thought and deliberation is greater in a male. As against this one notes that a female's body is equipped with organs to carry a child and feed it with her milk. This is a special feature bestowed upon her, indicating that a .child's training is her obligation

Training a child needs strength and richness of feelings so that the child's growing and ever…changing demands are catered to. Undoubtedly, woman, with her special physical features meant to bring up children, has also been equipped by nature with the required emotions and

strong feelings of love and affection for the child. This maintains the discipline and .order in human life

The very fact that the woman is endowed with great affection and tender sentiments as compared with a man goes to prove her special responsibilities towards human .society and there is no need for any elaborate argument in this respect

Role of Thought and Emotion

Affection is a deep, tender sentiment that creates a sense of tolerance, courage and patience. It is soon provoked and makes a deep immediate effect. It is a sentiment that needs no deliberation or any long drawn out preliminaries. Its objective is quickly attained and no careful long term planning is needed. Affection, in other words, is deep interest and strong passion that is superficial and not deep rooted but at the .same time elegant and glorious

A child's cry or his smile soon provokes the loving heart of the mother and attracts her deep affection. It is with the mother's burning affection that children's continual demands are fulfilled. The lamentations and bitter sighs of a pale…faced patient and his bony frame can affect only a sensitive heart, which would provide it with untiring .nursing care

The scene of untiring and ceaseless efforts of a man in his struggle for a living, his perspiring forehead, his tired face and exhausted nerves invoke the sentiment of affection in a woman. It is out of this sentiment that she tries to make her house a well…managed refuge full of joy, so that the exhaustion caused to her

husband due to his, struggle in life can be compensated for in the warmth and .affectionate atmosphere of the family

It is under the shadow of this affection and the freshness of this loving sentiment that man forgets his fatigue. It is the aesthetic sense of a woman and her flair for elegance that affects the dress of her husband and children and gives a look of charm and .luxury to the home and makes it glow with life and the spirit to live

As against this, the search for livelihood and struggle for life need far…sightedness and .perseverance, both of which require thoughtfulness

Sentiment cannot tolerate to view objectives and goals from a far…off distance. It cannot rear into its heart a love which may ripen and bear fruit ten years later, which would at first appear like a fairy tale or myth for whose achievement it has to tolerate all kinds of hardships. It cannot traverse this long distance, overcome obstructions on .its way and pave the path towards success

The emotive spirit does not get along well with deceptive and colourful manifestations in the path of the search for a living. This strenuous and crooked path needs strength that, despite tender sentiments, is accompanied by a fiery doggedness that does not easily surrender, but exhibits a tolerance and coolness that supersedes sentiment and emotion. It is through such hardheartedness and connivance that a man has to .run the race of reaching prosperity and achieving his objectives

It is up to

a man to maintain and protect his family in the tumult of life, whether it is by cutting wood in a jungle, or by operating huge industrial machines and installations, or .participation in the battlefield or managing the affairs of the government and society

All need hard work, far…sightedness and planning. This cannot be achieved by gentle sentiments, or emotional ethos or tender…heartedness. Every organization has its own peculiar interests. The administration of different aspects of life needs different qualities, sometimes thoughtfulness and at other times sympathy, sometimes finesse .and feeling, and at other times, strength and serenity

Since all the wheels of society must continuously move, the system of creation has equipped each man and woman with a particular type of constitution. Each is greatly .valuable in its own place and useful and worthy in its own manifestations

Despite this difference and variety in structure, the personality of neither is crushed. .Instead each has a specified path to cover

.This was a description from the physiological and psychological points of views

Equal Rights of Men and Women and the Islamic Viewpoint

Islam considers men and women equal as far as the basic human rights are concerned. It not only recognizes a human personality for both, but also considers them equal in all rights and human privileges. The following verses of the Qur'an :support this statement

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِى خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَهٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ..

O, mankind, fear your Lord who created you from a single soul and from it created its" mate, and from

(the pair of them scattered abroad many men and women ....” (۴:۱

:And

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ...

O mankind! We have created you male and female and appointed you races and“ tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of (God is the most God fearing of you ....”(۴۹:۱۳

أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِنْكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ ۖ بَعْضُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْضٍ

I waste not the labour of any that labours among you, be you male or female ...the“ (one of you is from the other ....”(۳:۱۹۵

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ

And the believers the men and the women, are friends one of the other; they bid to“ honour and forbid dishonour; they perform the prayer, and pay the alms, and they (obey God and His Messenger. Those upon them God will have mercy .... “(۹: ۷۱

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

Men and women who have surrendered (unto Allah), believing men and believing“ women, obedient men and obedient women, truthful men arid truthful women, enduring men and enduring women, humble men and humble women, men and women who give in charity, men who fast and women who fast, men and

women who guard their private parts, men and women who remember God much, for (them God has prepared forgiveness and a mighty re ward. "(۳۳:۳۵

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِنْ نِسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهُنَّ ۖ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ

O believers, let not any people scoff at another people who may 'be better than they;" neither let women scoff at women who may be better than they. And find not fault (with one another, neither revile one another by nicknames ...." (۴۹:۱۱

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَىٰ وَهْنٍ وَفِصَالُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ ...

And We have charged man concerning his parents...his mother bore him in weakness" upon weakness, and his weaning was in two years...be thankful to Me and to your (parents ...."(۳۱:۱۴

...هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ...

They (women) are a vestment for you, and you (men) are a vestment for them" (...."(۲:۱۸۷

لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ

To the men a share of what parents and kinsmen leave and to the women a share of " (what parents and kinsmen leave ...."(۴:۷

... لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِمَّا اكْتَسَبُوا وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِمَّا اكْتَسَبْنَ ...

To the men a share from what they have earned, and to the women a share from " (what they have earned ....(۴:۳۲

الزَّانِيَةُ وَالزَّانِي فَاجْلِدُوا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهُمَا مِائَةَ جَلْدَةٍ ۖ وَلَا تَأْخُذْكُمْ بِهِمَا رَأْفَةٌ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ...

The fornicatress and the fornicator...scourge each one"

of them a hundred stripes, and in the matter of God's religion, let not tenderness for (them seize you if you believe in God and the Last Day ...."(۲۴:۲

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَٰلِكَ أَزْكَىٰ لَهُمْ ...وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ ...

Say to the believers, that they cast down their eyes and guard their private parts;" that is purer for them ....And say to the believing women, that they cast down their (eyes and guard their private parts ...".(۲۴:۳۰_۳۱

وَالسَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطَعُوا أَيْدِيَهُمَا جَزَاءً بِمَا كَسَبَا نَكَالًا مِنَ اللَّهِ ...

And the thief, male and female: cut off the hands of both as a recompense for what" (they have earned and a punishment exemplary from God ...."(۵:۳۸

These Verses were quoted as examples only, for there are many more verses clearly mentioning both the men and women and specifying the directions in their regard. Apart from this, there are hundreds of verses that take the form of address, "O .mankind!" or "O believers!" which cover both men and women

The above_mentioned verses, in short, mean as follows: Both men and women are human beings, both are expected to follow Islam, be faithful and obedient believers. The good reward, paradise and God's grace are for both. Both have similar duties to perform; for instance, the ritual prayer, fasting, Zakat, to command to good and to .prohibit from evil

The criterion of their personal superiority is based on piety and guarding themselves ,against evil. Moral virtues such as tolerance, sublimity, truthfulness

help to the poor ….are desirable for both. Both are required to observe chastity and .keep their looks cast down

Moral vices, such as obscene acts, backbiting and mockery are not desirable for either of them. Both inherit property. The right to property and usage of property is granted .to both men and women. The father and mother both deserve extreme respect

Both men and women are responsible for their deeds, which shall not go un-reckoned. Both are equal in the eyes of the Law and are to be punished for crimes committed. Finally, if a woman is at some loss in a particular case from the legal point of view, at another place the Law compensates for this loss and effects a legal .balance in her favour

Other verses in the Qur'an independently mention woman's rights, occasionally ordaining men to preserve those limits. At times the attitude of the pre…Islamic culture in regard to women is criticized. For example, a verse condemns the practice of :slaying girl…infants in the words

وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ

(And when the buried infant shall be asked for what sin she was slain. "(۸۱:۸…۹"

In addition to this, the Qur'an discusses well…known women of religious history and describes their lives to the extent that falls within the scope of its objective. Such women are twelve in number. Even one of the Surahs of the Qur'an is named Surat .al…Nisa', which glorifies women

In the above paragraphs, a general discussion regarding the respect shown by the Qur'an to the

woman has been mentioned. A description has also been made of the equal rights of .men and women. This prepares the grounds for a future debate

Women in A Qur'anic Society

point

Lois Lamya al-Faruqi

The topic of this paper was chosen out of the conviction that humanity is suffering today from a number of serious social problems related to women and to the interrelations of the two sexes in society. Although these problems may be more pronounced, disturbing, more debilitating for some of us than for others, there are probably few if any regions of the contemporary world whose citizens have not felt in .some way the repercussions of these problems

Therefore, there is a pressing need for exploring possible solutions. The problem of women is linked, for the present study, with the Qur'an, and what I have called the "Qur'anic society," out of strong conviction that the Qur'an offers the most viable suggestions for contemporary social reform which can be found in any model or any .literature

Many of you may be puzzled by the title of this paper-"Women in a Qur'anic Society." You may ask yourselves, "Why didn't she say "Women in Muslim Society" or even "Women in an Islamic Society?" Let me explain why the expressions "Muslim" and "Islamic" were rejected for this paper, and how the use of the rather unusual .appellation, "Qur'anic society," is justified

There are at least three reasons for my choice of that title. The first of these derives from the concern that many beliefs and practices

.have been labelled “Muslim” or “Islamic” without warranting those names

There are approximately ۴۰ nations of the world which claim to have a Muslim majority population and therefore to be exemplary of “Muslim” or “Islamic” societies. This of course results in a great deal of confusion as the question is asked: Which of ?these regions represents most faithfully the true “Islamic” society

Among Muslims that question is most frequently answered by the claim that their own .national or regional society is the truest to the intentions of Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala

Non-Muslims, on the other hand, and especially the Western anthropologists who travel around the world to investigate the customs and mores of its peoples, tend to .treat each variation within the Muslim World as equally valid

This result from their adherence to what I call the “zoo theory” of knowledge. Adherents of that theory regard all Muslims-and of course similar treatment of other non-Western people is discernible-as different species within the human zoo. The “zoo theory” protagonists go to the field, record and snap pictures of every strange or .exotic practice they see and hear; and for them, this is Islam or Islamic practice

A trip to another part of the Muslim World with the ubiquitous devices for recording and photographing generates a different body of materials documenting superficial variations in customs. But this, too, is Islam or Islamic practice for the “zoo theory” .investigator or ethnographer

There is far too little effort spent on understanding Islam as a

whole. As a result, the basic premise of skepticism and relativism is confirmed in the mind of the researcher; and he/she returns home convinced that there is not one Islam, but scores of Islams existent in the world. In like fashion, the researcher reports that there are many definitions or descriptions of the status and role of .women in Muslim society

Each one of the resultant definitions or descriptions is dubbed as "Muslim" or "Islamic" even if we as Muslims may hold some of these practices to be distortions or .perversions of our principles and beliefs by the misguided or uninformed among us

It was partly to avoid confusion with these variant descriptions and misunderstandings that I have chosen the appellation "Qur'anic" for the present discussion. In this way, I hope to move beyond the limited relevance and particularism of a "zoo theory" of investigation to a presentation which avoids such fragmentation .and is ideologically in conformance with the true prescriptions of Islam

In regard to matters so determining of our destiny and very existence, we can never be satisfied with mere reportage about certain human animals in the "zoo" who are statistically "Muslim" or whose customs have been labelled as "Islamic." Those designations have sometimes been misapplied. "Qur'anic," on the other hand, is a .term which is unequivocal. It points clearly to the topic of this paper

Secondly, "Qur'anic society" was judged to be the most suitable title for it orients us towards discovering those core principles in the

Qur'an itself which form the underlying framework for our societies throughout the .Muslim World

It is the society based on Qur'anic principles which is the goal of all of us, even though we may unknowingly deviate from time to time from those principles. It is the conformance to a Qur'an-based society for which we must all work if the Muslim .peoples are to enjoy a felicitous future

It is not an Indonesian, Pakistani, Saudi Arabian, Egyptian or Nigerian version of that society that we should regard as indisputable norm, but one firmly based on the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. Only therein can we find a proper definition of woman's role in society. Since it is these teachings which are the subject of my paper, “Women .in a Qur'anic Society” seemed the most proper title

Thirdly, I wish by this choice of title to emphasize that we should regard the Holy Qur'an as our guide in all aspects of our lives. It is not only the prime source of knowledge about religious beliefs, obligations, and practices, it is also the guide, whether specific or implied, for every aspect of Islamic civilization. In the centuries of past glory, it determined the political, economic, social and artistic creativity of the .Muslim peoples

If we are to succeed as members of an Islamic society in the coming decades and centuries, it must again determine our thinking and our actions in an all-inclusive way. Din is not limited to the Five Pillars of the

.shahadah, salat, siyam, zakat, and the hajj

Din in fact defies simple equation with the English term "religion," for the former's significance penetrates into every nook and cranny of human existence and behaviour. Surely it should be our goal to relate every action to our Din. We can only .do this by allowing the Holy Qur'an to in-form and re-form every realm of our lives

As a step in this direction, let us consider what the Qur'an has to teach us about the society towards which we should be striving, and ponder its effect on the position of women. What are the basic characteristics of a Qur'anic society which particularly ?affect women

Five characteristics - which seem basic, crucial and incontrovertible - of Qur'anic society will be considered. Although they are presented in a series, each one rests upon the others and affects them. The interdependence of these five characteristics makes it difficult to speak of any one of them without mention of the others, and of .course they do not and cannot exist in isolation from one another

Equal Status And Worth Of The Sexes .۱

point

The first of these characteristics of a Qur'anic society which affect women is that both sexes are held to be equal in status and worth. In other words, the Qur'an teaches us that women and men are all creatures of Allah, existing on a level of equal worth and value, although their equal importance does not substantiate a claim for their equivalence or perfect identity. This equality of male and

female is documentable in the Qur'an in passages pertaining to at least four aspects .of human existence and interaction

A. Religious Matters

The first of these Qur'anic confirmations of male-female equality are contained in statements pertaining to such religious matters as the origins of humanity, or to .religious obligations and rewards

Origins of Humanity. The Qur'an is devoid of the stories found in the Old Testament .١ which denigrate women. There is no hint that the first woman created by God is a creature of lesser worth than the first male, or that she is a kind of appendage formed from one of his ribs. Instead, male and female are created, we read, min nafsin .(wahidatin ("from a single soul or self") to complement each other (Qur'an ۴:۱; ۷:۱۸۹

Whereas the Torah or Old Testament treats Eve as the temptress of the Garden of Eden, who aids Satan in enticing Adam to disobey God, the Qur'an deals with the pair with perfect equity. Both are equally guilty of sinning; both are equally punished by .God with expulsion from the Garden; and both are equally forgiven when they repent

Religious Obligations and Rewards. The Qur'an is not less clear in commanding .٢ equality for men and women in its directives regarding religious obligations and :rewards. We read

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

Lo! Men who surrender unto Allah, and women

who surrender, and men who believe and women who believe, and men who obey and women who obey, and men who speak the truth and women who speak the truth, and men who persevere (in righteousness) and women who persevere and men who are humble and women who are humble, and men who give aims and women who give alms, and men who fast and women who fast, and men who guard their modesty and women who guard (their modesty), and men who remember Allah and women who remember-Allah hath prepared for them forgiveness and a vast (reward. (٣٣:٣٥

B. Ethical Obligations and Rewards

Secondly, the Qur'an reveals to mankind the desired equality of the two sexes by .establishing the same ethical obligations and rewards for women and men

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ نَقِيرًا

And who so does good works, whether male or female, and he (or she) is a believer, (such will enter Paradise and they will not be wronged the dint in a date-stone. (۴:۱۲۴

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهُ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً ۖ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

Whosoever does right, whether male or female, and is a believer, him verily We shall quicken with good life, and We shall pay them a recompense according to the best of (what they do. (۱۶:۹۷

If Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala had not deemed the two sexes of equal status and value, such explicit statements of their equality in ethical obligations

.and rewards would not have been made in the Qur'an

C. Education

Although the more specific commands for the equal rights of women and men to pursue education can be found in the hadith literature, the Qur'an does at least imply the pursuit of knowledge by all Muslims regardless of their sex. For example, it repeatedly commands all readers to read, to recite, to think, to contemplate, as well as to learn from the signs (ayat) of Allah in nature. In fact, the very first revelation to .Prophet Muhammad (S) was concerned with knowledge

In a Qur'anic society, there can never be a restriction of this knowledge to one sex. It is the duty of every Muslim and every Muslimah to pursue knowledge throughout life, even if it should lead the seeker to China, we are told. The Prophet (S) even commanded that the slave girls be educated, and he asked Shifa' bint 'Abdillah to instruct his wife Hafsah bint 'Umar. Lectures of the Prophet (S) were attended by audiences of both men and women; and by the time of the Prophet's death, there .were many women scholars

D. Legal Rights

A fourth evidence in the Qur'an for the equality of men and women is its specification of legal rights which are guaranteed for every individual from cradle to grave. Unlike the situation in the West, where until the last century it was impossible for a married woman to hold property on her own, to contract with other persons, or to dispose of her property

without the consent of her husband, the Qur'an proclaims the right of every woman to buy and sell, to contract and to earn, and to hold and manage her own money and .property

In addition to these rights, the Qur'an grants woman a share in the inheritance of the family (۴:۷-۱۱), warns against depriving her of that inheritance (۴:۱۹), specifies that the dower (mahr) of her marriage should belong to her alone and never be taken by her .(husband (۲:۲۲۹; ۴:۱۹-۲۱,۲۵) unless offered by the woman as a free gift (۴:۴۴

As with any privilege, these rights of women carry corresponding responsibilities. If she commits a civil offence, the Qur'an tells us, woman's penalty is no less or no more than that of a man in a similar case (۵:۴۱; ۲۴:۲). If she is wronged or harmed, she is .entitled to compensation just like a man

It is clear that the Qur'an not only recommends, but is even insistent upon, the equality of women and men as an essential characteristic of a Qur'anic society. The claim of the non-Muslim critics that Islam denigrates women is denied emphatically .by the Qur'an

Similarly denied are the arguments of certain Muslims that women are religiously, intellectually and ethically inferior to men, as Jewish and Christian literatures had .earlier maintained

A Dual Sex Rather Than Unisex Society .۲

Now let us consider the second basic characteristic of the Qur'anic society which affects the position of women. This is found in the directives for a dual sex rather than a unisex society. While

maintaining the validity of the equal worth of men and women, the Qur'an does not .judge this equality to mean equivalence or identity of the sexes

Probably all of you are familiar with the contemporary move toward unisex clothes and shoes, unisex jewellery and hair styles, unisex actions and entertainments. In .fact, it is often difficult in America to decide whether one is looking at a boy or a girl

This results from the current notion in Western society that there is little if any difference between the two sexes in physical, intellectual and emotional endowment; and that, therefore, there should be no difference in their functions and roles in society. The dress and the actions are but superficial evidence of this deeper .conviction

Accompanied by a downgrading of the qualities and roles traditionally associated with the female sex, this current idea has generated a unisex society in which only the male role is respected and pursued. Although meant to bring a larger measure of equality for women, the idea that men and women are not only equal, but equivalent and identical, has actually pushed women into imitating men and even despising their .womanhood

Thus it is generating a new type of male chauvinism. Tremendous social pressures have resulted in stripping women of their role-responsibilities formerly performed by .them, and they are forced to live a life devoid of personality and individuality

The society based on the Qur'an is, in contrast, a dual-sex society in which both sexes are assigned

their special responsibilities. This assures the healthy functioning of the society for the benefit of all its members. This division of labour imposes on men more economic responsibilities (۲:۲۳۳, ۲۴۰-۲۴۱; ۴:۳۴), while women are expected to play their role in .(childbearing and rearing (۲:۲۳۳; ۷:۱۸۹

The Qur'an, recognising the importance of this complementary sexual assignment of roles and responsibilities, alleviates the greater economic demands made on male members of the population by allotting them a larger share than women in inheritance. At the same time it grants women the right to maintenance in exchange for her contribution to the physical and emotional well-being of the family and to the .care she provides in the rearing of children

The unisex ideology generates a competitive relationship between the sexes which we find in America and which is disastrous for all members of society: the young; the .old; the children; the parents; the single and the married; the male and the female

The dual-sex society, by contrast, is a more natural answer to the question of sexual relationships, a plan encouraging co-operation rather than competition between the sexes. It is a plan which has been found suitable in countless societies through history. Only in very recent times did the idea of sexual non-differentiation or identity achieve .prominence, and then primarily in the Western society

Even the medical evidence for mental or emotional difference between the sexes is suppressed in Western research, for it threatens the prevailing trends of thought. How long this socially

disastrous movement will continue before it is rejected as bankrupt is not known. But certainly we as Muslims should be aware of its deficiencies and dangerous consequences, and make our societies and young people aware of the disaster .caused by it

Protagonists of the unisex society have condemned the dual-sex human organisation as dangerous for the well-being of women. If dual sex means that one sex is superior to the other, such a situation could have arisen. But in the true Qur'anic society, .toward which we all aspire to move, this is not possible

As we have seen above, the Qur'an advocates eloquently the equal status of women and men at the same time as it recognises their generally relevant differences of nature and function. Thus while acknowledging the religious, ethical, intellectual and legal equality of males and females, the Qur'an never regards the two sexes as identical or equivalent. It justifies this stand in its assignment of variant responsibilities and its provisions regarding inheritance and maintenance which .match those responsibilities

Interdependence Of The Members Of Society .۳

The third characteristic of the Qur'anic society which is strongly assertive of women's position is the insistence on the interdependence of the members of society. Contrary to the contemporary trend to emphasize the rights of the individual at the expense of society, we find the Qur'an repeatedly emphasising the interdependence of the male .and female as well as of all members of society

The wife and husband, for example, are described as "garments" (libas) of each other (۲:۱۸۷), and

as mates living and dwelling in tranquillity (۳۳:۲۱; see also ۷:۱۸۹). Men and women are directed to complement each other, not to compete with each other. They are the protectors of each other (۹:۷۱). Each is called upon to fulfil certain assigned .responsibilities for the good of both and the larger group

In order to insure this interdependence which is so necessary for the physical and psychological well-being of both men and women, Allah, in the Holy Qur'an, stipulated the reciprocal or mutual duties and obligations of the various members of the family-men and women, fathers and mothers, children and elders, and relatives of all degrees (۱۷:۲۳-۲۶; ۴:۱, ۷-۱۲; ۲:۱۷۷; ۸:۴۱; ۱۶:۹۰; etc.). The care of and concern for other .members of society is equally a duty of the Muslim

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَٰكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ ...

It is not righteousness that you turn faces to the east and the west; but righteous is he who believes in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Scripture and the prophets; and gives his wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the (needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free ... (۲:۱۷۷

The Qur'an thereby instils in the Muslim a sense of a place within, and responsibility to society. This is not regarded or experienced

as a repression of the individual. Instead the Muslim is constantly encouraged in this .interdependence by experiencing the benefits it brings

The economic, social and psychological advantages of such close relationships and concerns within the social group provide more than ample compensation for the individual to sublimate his/her individualistic aspirations. The anonymity and lack of social interdependence among its members in contemporary Western society have .caused many serious problems

Loneliness, inadequate care of the aged, the generation gap, high suicide rates, and juvenile crime can all be traced back to the ever-worsening breakdown of social .interdependence and the denial of the human necessity for mutual care

The Extended Family .۴

Closely intertwined with interdependence is the fourth basic characteristic of the Qur'anic society which serves to improve male-female relations. This is the institution of the extended family. In addition to the members of the nucleus that constitutes the family- mother, father and their children-the Islamic family or 'a'ilah also includes .grandparents, uncles, aunts and their offspring

Normally Muslim families are "residentially extended;" that is, their members live communally with three or more generations of relatives in a single building or compound. Even where this residential version of the extended family is not possible or adhered to, family connections reaching far beyond the nuclear unit are evident in .strong psychological, social, economic and even political ties

The extended family solidarity is prescribed and strengthened by the Holy Qur'an, where we find repeated references to the rights of kin (۱۷:۲۳-۲۶; ۴:۷-۹; ۸:۴۱; ۲۴:۲۲; etc.) and the

importance of treating them with kindness (۲ :۸۳; ۱۶: ۹۰; etc.). Inheritance portions, for not only the nuclear family members but those of the extended family as well, are .(specifically prescribed (۲:۱۸۰-۱۸۲; ۴:۳۳,۱۷۶

Dire punishment is threatened for those who ignore these measures for intra-family support (۴:۷-۱۲). The extended family of Islamic culture is thus not merely a product of social conditions, it is an institution anchored in the word of God Himself and .buttressed by Qur'anic advice and rules

The extended family is an institution which can provide tremendous benefits for both women and men when it exists in conjunction with the other basic characteristics of a .Qur'anic society

It guards against the selfishness or eccentricity of any one party, since the (۱ individual faces not a single spouse but a whole family of peers, elders and children if ".he or she goes "off course

It allows for careers for women without detriment to themselves, spouse, children (۲ or elders, since there are always other adults in the home to assist the working wife or mother. Career women in an Islamic extended family suffer neither the physical and emotional burden of overwork nor the feeling of guilt for neglecting maternal, .marital or familial responsibilities

In fact, without this sort of family institution, it is impossible to imagine any feasible solution for the problems now facing Western society. As more and more women enter the work force, the nuclear family is unable to sustain the needs of its members. The

.difficulties in the single parent family are of course magnified a hundred-fold

The strain that such family systems put on the working woman are devastating to the individual as well as to the marriage and family bonds. The dissolutions of families which result and psychological and social ramifications of the high divorce rate in America and other Western nations are the growing concern of doctors, lawyers, psychiatrists and sociologists as well as, of course, of the unfortunate victims of these .phenomena

The extended family insures the adequate socialization of children. A mother's or (۳ father's advice in a nuclear or single parent family may be difficult to be followed by an unruly or obstinate child, but the combined pressure of the members of a strong .extended family is an effective counter to non-conformance or disobedience

The extended family provides for psychological and social diversity in (۴ companionship for adults as well as children. Since there is less dependence on the one-to-one relationship, there are less emotional demands on each member of the family. A disagreement or clash between adults, children or between persons of different generations does not reach the damaging proportions it may in the nuclear .family

There are always alternative family members on hand to ease the pain and provide therapeutic counselling and companionship. Even the marriage bond is not put to the .enormous strains that it suffers in the nuclear family

The extended family or a'ilah guards against the development of the generation (۵ gap. This social

problem arises when each age group becomes so isolated from other generations that it finds difficulty in achieving successful and meaningful interaction with people of a different age level. In the 'a'ilah, three or more generations live together and constantly interact with one another. This situation provides beneficial learning and socialization experiences for children and the necessary sense of security and .usefulness for the older generation

The 'a'ilah eliminates the problems of loneliness which plague the isolated and (۶ anonymous dwellers in the urban centres of many contemporary societies. The unmarried woman, or the divorced or widowed woman in an Islamic extended family will never suffer the problems that face such women in contemporary American .society, for example

In a Qur'anic society, there is no need for the commercial computer dating establishments, the singles' clubs and bars, or the isolation of senior citizens in .retirement villages or old people's homes

The social and psychological needs of the individual, whether male or female, are .cared for in the extended family

As marriage-bonds grow more and more fragile in Western society, women tend to be the chief victims of the change. They are less able to re-establish marriage or .other bonds than men, and they are more psychologically damaged by these losses

The extended family provides a more feasible and humane sharing of the care of (۷ the elderly. In the nuclear family unit, the care of the elderly parent or parents of one spouse may fall entirely on one individual, usually

the mother of the family. She must provide for the extra physical care as well as for .the emotional well-being of the elderly

This is a tremendous burden on a woman who probably has children's and husband's needs to attend to as well. If she is a working mother, the burden can be unmanageable; and the elderly are put in an old peoples' home to await death. With the shared responsibilities and duties that the extended family provides, the burden is . significantly lightened

A Patriarchal Family Organization .۵

The fifth basic characteristic of a Qur'anic society is that it is patriarchal. Contrary to the goals of the Women's Liberation movement, the Qur'an calls for a society which .assigns the ultimate leadership and decision-making role in the family to men

Any society is made up of smaller organisations of humans, governments, political parties, religious organisations, commercial enterprises, extended families, etc. Each of these organs needs to be stable, cohesive and manoeuvrable if it is to be beneficial to its constituents. In order to acquire these characteristics, the organisation must .assign ultimate responsibility to some individual or some group within its ranks

Therefore, the citizens may vote, parliament may legislate, and the police may enforce the law; but it is ultimately the head of state that carries the burden of making the crucial decisions for the nation, as well as the onus or approval, i.e., the .responsibility, for those decisions

In like manner, the work of a factory is conducted by many individuals, but all of

them are not equally capable of making the ultimate decisions for the company. Neither is each employee equally charged with the responsibility for the .organisation's success or failure

The family also has need for someone to carry the burden of ultimate responsibility for the whole. The Qur'an has assigned this role to the most senior male member of the family. It is this patriarchal assignment of power and responsibility which is meant by such expressions as “wa lil rijali 'alathinna darajatun “ (۲.۲۲۸; see supra, pp. ۴۰, ۴۱), .(and “al-rijalu qawwdmuna 'ala al-nisa'i.... “ (۴:۳۴

Contrary to misrepresentations by the Qur'an's enemies, these passages do not mean the subjugation of women to men in a gender-based dictatorship. Such an interpretation shows a blatant disregard of the Qur'an's repeated calls for the equality of the sexes and for its command to show respect and kindness to women. The passages in question point instead to a means for avoiding internal dissension and indecision for the benefit of all family members. They advocate for a patriarchal .society

In addition, we would draw attention to the use of the word qawwamun in the statement, al-rijalu qawwamuna 'ala al-nisa'i ... (۴:۳۴). Certainly the verb qawwama, from which the verbal noun qawwamun is derived, does not imply despotic over-.lordship

Instead, the term refers to the one who stands up (from qama, “to stand”) for another in a protective and benevolent way. If an autocratic or domineering role for the male half of the society had been

meant, there are many other verbal derivatives which would have been more .applicable, for example, musaytirun and muhayminun

Other instances of the Qur'anic use of the term qawwamun confirm this supportive rather than authoritarian or tyrannical meaning of the term (see ۴:۱۲۷-۱۳۵; ۵:۹). Ascription of a different significance to the passage in question is, therefore, .ideologically inconsistent as well as linguistically unsupportable

Why should the Qur'an specify male leadership for the 'a'ilah, i.e., a patriarchal family, rather than a matriarchal organisation? The Qur'an answers that question in the :following manner

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ...

Men are in charge of women, because Allah has made the one of them to excel the (other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women)....(۴:۳۴

Physical and economic contributions and responsibility are, therefore, the Qur'anic .reasons for proposing a patriarchal rather than a matriarchal society

Some Westerners, confronted by the problems of contemporary society, are beginning to ask such questions as: Where can we turn for help? What can we do in the face of the present social disintegration? It is a time of despair and searching as Western society reels under the blows of steadily increasing personal disorientation .and societal dissolution

What can we do as Muslims to help? First of all, we must build true Qur'anic societies throughout the Muslim World. Without these, we cannot establish equitable and .viable accommodation for the interaction of men and women in society

,In addition

we cannot hope to establish in the coming generations a respect for and loyalty to our societies and their accompanying institutions if pseudo-Islamic societies are the only .ones we are capable of producing and maintaining

Pseudo-Islamic measures or institutions are actually anti-Islamic; for they posit a model which cannot be respected, and attach to it the label of "islam" in the minds of many Muslims as well as non-Muslim. this results in a wrongful transfer of the onus of .the faulty institution to the religion of Islam itself

We must educate our fellow Muslims-and especially the youth for they are the leaders of tomorrow-with regard to the importance and viability of their Qur'anic .traditions concerning women, the family and society

Despite the failure of alternative contemporary Western social patterns, some Muslims seem to hanker after the Western brand of sexual equality, its unisex ideas and modes of behaviour, overemphasis on individualism or personal freedom from .responsibility, and the nuclear family system

We must awake to the dangers which accompany such social ideas and practices. If the consequences of these ideas and practices are not pointed out and combated, we .are doomed to an unfortunate future as such social experiments are to fail ultimately

But even this is not an adequate response for us as Muslims. As vicegerents of Allah on earth (۲:۳۰), it is our duty to be concerned about the whole world and about all of God's creatures. In the light of the command to propagate the will of

Allah in every corner of the earth, we should not neglect to suggest or offer the good .that we know to others

It is time for Islam and the Muslims to present their solutions of the problems of contemporary society, not only to the Muslim audience, but to the non-Muslim .audience as well

This can and should be done through the living example of true Qur'anic societies in which the problems of men and women are resolved. It should also be done through informative writings and discussions by our scholars which could be made available to .Muslims and non-Muslims alike

There is no better way to serve the will of Allah and the whole of mankind. There is no better da'wah than such offering of a helping hand to the struggling victims of .contemporary society

p: ۷۴

About center

In the name of Allah

هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ

?Are those who know equal to those who do not know

al-Zumar: ٩

:Introduction

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ٢٠٠٧, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities .in religious, cultural and scientific fields

:Manifesto

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan in order to facilitate and accelerate the accessibility of researchers to the books and tools of research, in the field of Islamic science, and regarding the multiplicity and dispersion of active centers in this field

and numerous and inaccessible sources by a mere scientific intention and far from any kind of social, political, tribal and personal prejudices and currents, based on performing a project in the shape of (management of produced and published works from all Shia centers) tries to provide a rich and free collection of books and research papers for the experts, and helpful contents and discussions for the educated generation and all classes of people interested in reading, with various formats in the .cyberspace

:Our Goals are

(propagating the culture and teachings of Thaqalayn (Quran and Ahlulbayt p.b.u.t-

encouraging the populace particularly the youth in investigating the religious issues-

replacing useful contents with useless ones in the cellphones, tablets and computers-

providing services for seminary and university researchers-

spreading culture study in the publich-

paving the way for the publications and authors to digitize their works-

:Policies

acting according to the legal licenses-

relationship with similar centers-

avoiding parallel working-

merely presenting scientific contents-

mentioning the sources-

.It's obvious that all the responsibilities are due to the author

:Other activities of the institute

Publication of books, booklets and other editions-

Holding book reading competitions-

Producing virtual, three dimensional exhibitions, panoramas of religious and tourism- places

.Producing animations, computer games and etc-

Launching the website with this address: www.ghaemiyeh.com-

Fabricatingdramatic and speech works-

Launching the system of answering religious, ethical and doctrinal questions-

Designing systems of accounting, media and mobile, automatic and handy systems,- web kiosks

Holding virtual educational courses for the public-

Holding virtual teacher-training courses-

Producing thousands of research software in three languages (Persian, Arabic and- English) which can be performed in computers, tablets and cellphones and available and downloadable with eight international formats: JAVA, ANDROID, EPUB, CHM, PDF, HTML, CHM, GHB on the website

Also producing four markets named "Ghaemiyeh Book Market" with Android, IOS,- WINDOWS PHONE and WINDOWS editions

:Appreciation

We would appreciate the centers, institutes, publications, authors and all honorable .friends who contributed their help and data to us to reach the holy goal we follow

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